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1 A birnavirus mutant which is not able to produce a native VP5 protein as a result of a mutation in the VP5 gene of the birnavirus genome.

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2 A birnavirus mutant according to claim 1, characterised in that the mutation is a substitution.

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3 A birnavirus mutant according to claim 1, characterised in that the mutation is an insertion of a heterologous nucleic acid sequence.

4 A birnavirus mutant according to claim 3, characterised in that the heterologous nucleic acid sequence encodes a polypeptide and the heterologous nucleic acid sequence is under the control of an expression control sequence regulating the expression of the sequence in a cell infected with the virus mutant.

5 A birnavirus mutant according to claims 1-4, characterised in that the birnavirus is infectious bursal disease virus (IBDV).

6 A birnavirus mutant according to claim 5, characterised in that the mutation is in the genome of a virulent field virus.

7 A birnavirus mutant according to claim 5, characterised in that the mutation is in the genome of vaccine strain, preferably in vaccine strain D78.

8 A birnavirus mutant according to claims 5-7, characterised in that the mutant has a mutated start codon and three stop codons in the 5'-end of the VP5 gene as shown in SEQ ID No: 7.

9 A birnavirus according to claims 5-8, characterised in that the IBDV expresses a chimeric VP2 protein comprising virus neutralising epitopes of different antigenic IBDV types.

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(ii) detecting the presence of the antibody-antigen complex.

~~14 Use of the lack of the expression of native VP5 protein by a birnavirus mutant as a marker to distinguish vaccinated animals from animals infected with naturally-occurring birnavirus.~~

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